

International Education: The European Union



This lesson is designed as an individual study of the European Union. The lesson requires a **one-hour period** for teacher implementation and student research. Approximately **one student homework hour** is necessary to complete the assignment.

I. Content:

I want my students to:

- A. Understand the basic purpose, design, and function of the European Union.
- B. Reinforce their knowledge of the EU and its history.
- C. Evaluate the similarities and differences between the EU and the United States.

II. Prerequisites:

In order to fully appreciate this lesson, the student must know (or be experienced in):

- A. The basic history, structure and principles of the government of the United States.
- B. Basic geography of Europe.

III. Instructional Objective(s):

The student will:

- A. List the fundamental principles, powers and structure of the European Union.
- B. Role-play being a representative from a EU member country.
- C. Compare the European Union with the United States of America.

IV. Materials and Equipment

Teacher: Drama Script: “The Formation of the European Union”
(Teacher Handout #1)

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Place cards for countries in the drama (**Teacher Handout #2**)
Article from http://europa.eu.int/index_en.htm titled "The European Union at a Glance" (**Teacher Handout #3**)
"The European Union at a Glance"- Note sheet (**Teacher Handout #4**)

Student: Copy of the drama script, article and note sheet (**Teacher Handout #1**)
Writing utensil and notebook

V. Instructional Procedure:

- A. **Opener** - Begin class by asking the question "How would life be different for us if Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana, and Utah were their own countries instead of states?" Discuss answers as a class out loud or have them write a short journal entry. (Some ideas for answers: passports for traveling, restrictions on trade, currency, tax differences, etc.) Explain to them how before the European Union, the countries of Europe were neighbors and shared borders, but had a different currency, different trade policies with various countries, import and export taxes, and could only produce what they had the resources for within their borders. To get a better understanding, we are going to role-play a meeting of European nations.
- B. **Let's Roll Play** - Handout the "Drama Script: The Formation of the European Union". (**Teacher Handout #1**) Ask for volunteers to read the parts for the various countries. Have the readers come up front and arrange desks in a circle for them to sit in. Give each country a place card with their country's name on it. (**Teacher Handout #2**) Have them fold the place card and place it in front of them showing others what country they are representing. Read the drama script.
- C. **Informal Assessment** - Discuss the drama. Discussion questions you might use:
What were some of the reasons for forming the European Union?
What were some of the challenges the countries would face?
Do you think it is working?
- D. **Dig a Little Deeper** - Hand out the article "The European Union at a Glance" and the note sheet. (**Teacher Handouts #3 and #4**) Have them read the article and answer the questions as they read it or after they have completed the reading. The last question asks them to compare the United States and the European Union.

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VI. Assessment/Evaluation:

Informal assessment will occur during the class discussion. The formal assessment will be the completed note sheet, comparison short essay, and questions on the unit test. Each student's paper will be graded on the quality, content and accuracy of the understanding of the principles of the European Union and the United States.

VII. Idaho Achievement Standards:

- | | |
|-----------------|--|
| 9-12.USH2.5.1.2 | Trace the major foreign policy positions that have characterized the United States' relations with the world in the 20 th century |
| 9-12.USH2.5.1.3 | Explain the significance of principal events in the United States' relations with the world, such as World Wars I and II, formation of the United Nations, Marshall Plan, NATO, Korean and Vietnam Wars, end of the Cold War, and interventions in Latin America |
| 9-12.E.3.2.2 | Explain and illustrate the impact of economic policies and decisions made by governments, business and individuals. |
| 9-12.G.5.1.4 | Identify and evaluate the role of the United States in international organizations and agreements, such as United Nations, NAFTA, and the International Red Cross. |
| 9-12.G.5.1.2 | Discuss the mutual impact of ideas, issues, and policies among nations, including environmental, economic, and humanitarian. |
| 9-12.E.5.1.1 | Describe the involvement of the United States in international economic organizations and treaties, such as GATT, NAFTA, and the WTO. |

VIII. Follow Up or Extension Activities:

- A. Students find a current event article about what is happening in European Union. Write a summary of the article and a response stating their opinion. (Teacher Handout 5)

Teacher Handout 1

DRAMA SCRIPT: THE FORMATION OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

Narrator:

Europe is a continent made up of many small countries. There are many different languages and ethnic groups. Although there are many natural resources in Europe, they are not distributed equally among all the different countries. In addition, these countries all have different currencies and different tax laws with restrictions on imports and exports.

If the countries of Europe all compete with each other for economic advantages, how can they compete economically on the world market?

Belgium:

The country of Belgium recognized this problem 30 years ago.

Netherlands:

That's right. We agreed with Belgium. As early as 1948, we knew that the very small countries of Europe could not be successful on the world economic scene if we remained fragmented.

Luxembourg:

That's why we joined forces with Belgium and the Netherlands to form the Benelux Economic Union.

Belgium:

Our union was very successful. We got rid of restrictive taxes and barriers to trade among our three countries. We established our headquarters here in Brussels, Belgium, and traded goods back and forth freely with our good neighbors of Luxembourg and the Netherlands.

France:

Yes, but you needed more natural resources to develop your industry.

Germany:

You certainly needed coal, which, as you know; Germany has an abundance of in its Ruhr Valley.

France:

Well, don't forget, Germany, that everybody needs wheat. We have an important natural resource, too.

Italy:

Sure, you have natural resources but what good are they without labor? Italy can supply that.

Narrator:

When the Benelux nations recognized that Europe would be stronger economically with the combined resources of Italy, Germany, and France, a new union was formed called the European Economic Union.

Narrator:

The European Economic Union, or the Common Market as it is known in the UK, became the European Community, which is now a "pillar" under the European Union.

United Kingdom:

We recognized the advantages of the Common Market. We were reluctant, but we believe this is the best way for Europe to become powerful economically.

Teacher Handout 1

Denmark:

Denmark certainly agrees!

Austria:

So does Austria. That's why we joined the European Union with Sweden and Finland in 1995.

Spain:

By breaking down the trade barriers and allowing our diverse countries to exchange goods and labor freely across political boundaries, European countries can function like the individual states of the United States, with no trade restrictions across the political boundaries.

Portugal:

Right! There are no barriers to trade among the individual states of the United States. Labor and goods can be exchanged freely.

Ireland:

The United States can combine its natural resources and labor force to build a strong economy, and Europe can do the same if our countries form an economically unified group of individual countries.

Greece:

Don't forget, there are many problems to be faced. We don't believe that Europe, with all its diverse ethnic cultures and national histories, can blend together in a United States of Europe.

Denmark:

You are probably right, Greece. And don't forget that Europe also has more than 10 official languages. Communication on European Union policies will not be easy.

Sweden:

Yes, there are problems, but we must all submerge our national egos and think of ourselves first as Europeans.

Finland:

If we follow Germany's advice, the European Union can become an economic giant capable of competing with the United States and Japan.

Narrator:

The first 15 nations of the European Union include Belgium, Denmark, France, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, the United Kingdom, Germany, Austria, Sweden, and Finland. In 2004 Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia joined the EU. All 25 members have agreed to band together eventually into a "unified 'Superstate,' capable of restoring Europe to the apex of world power." The member nations are currently in the process of ratifying a constitution that will replace the various treaties that currently govern the European Union.

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Belgium

Netherlands

Luxembourg

France

Germany

Italy

**United
Kingdom**

Denmark

Austria

Spain

Portugal

Ireland

Greece

Sweden

Finland

Teacher Handout 3



The European Union (EU) is a family of democratic European countries, committed to working together for peace and prosperity. It is not a State intended to replace existing states, but it is more than any other international organization. The EU is, in fact, unique. Its Member States have set up common institutions to which they delegate some of their sovereignty so that decisions on specific matters of joint interest can be made democratically at European level. This pooling of sovereignty is also called "European integration".

The historical roots of the European Union lie in the Second World War. The idea of European integration was conceived to prevent such killing and destruction from ever happening again. It was first proposed by the French Foreign Minister Robert Schuman in a speech on 9 May 1950. This date, the "birthday" of what is now the EU, is celebrated annually as Europe Day.

There are five EU institutions, each playing a specific role:

- European Parliament (elected by the peoples of the Member States);
- Council of the European Union (representing the governments of the Member States);
- European Commission (driving force and executive body);
- Court of Justice (ensuring compliance with the law);
- Court of Auditors (controlling sound and lawful management of the EU budget).

These are flanked by five other important bodies:

- European Economic and Social Committee (expresses the opinions of organized civil society on economic and social issues);
- Committee of the Regions (expresses the opinions of regional and local authorities);
- European Central Bank (responsible for monetary policy and managing the euro);
- European Ombudsman (deals with citizens' complaints about maladministration by any EU institution or body);
- European Investment Bank (helps achieve EU objectives by financing investment projects);

A number of agencies and other bodies complete the system.

The rule of law is fundamental to the European Union. All EU decisions and procedures are based on the Treaties, which are agreed by all the EU countries.

Initially, the EU consisted of just six countries: Belgium, Germany, France, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands. Denmark, Ireland and the United Kingdom joined in 1973, Greece in 1981, Spain and Portugal in 1986, Austria, Finland and Sweden in 1995. In 2004 the biggest ever enlargement took place with 10 new countries joining.

In the early years, much of the co-operation between EU countries was about trade and the economy, but now the EU also deals with many other subjects of direct importance for our everyday life, such as citizens' rights; ensuring freedom, security and justice; job creation; regional development; environmental protection; making globalization work for everyone.

The European Union has delivered half a century of stability, peace and prosperity. It has helped to raise

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living standards, [built a single Europe-wide market](#), launched the single European currency, the [euro](#), and strengthened [Europe's voice in the world](#).

Unity in diversity: Europe is a continent with many different traditions and languages, but also with shared values. The EU defends these values. It fosters co-operation among the peoples of Europe, promoting unity while preserving diversity and ensuring that decisions are taken as close as possible to the citizens. In the increasingly interdependent world of the 21st century, it will be even more necessary for every European citizen to co-operate with people from other countries in a spirit of curiosity, tolerance and solidarity.

Printed version from: http://europa.eu.int/abc/print_index_en.htm

Teacher Handout 4

“The European Union at a Glance” - Note Sheet

Name: _____

Period: _____

Date: _____

Directions: Read the article titled “The European Union at a Glance” and answer the following questions or fill in the blank with the correct answer.

1. What does “EU” stand for? What is it and why is it unique? What does “European Integration” mean?

2. Where did the idea of European integration come from and why was it proposed? What is Europe Day and when is it celebrated?

3. List the five EU institutions and their specific roles:
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
 - 4.
 - 5.

4. The _____ expresses the opinions of organized civil society on economic and social issues.
5. The Committee of the Regions expresses the _____
_____.
6. The European Central Bank is responsible for _____
and _____.
7. The European Ombudsman deals with _____ about maladministration by any EU institution or body.

Teacher Handout 4

8. The _____ helps achieve EU objectives by financing investment projects.
9. What are the EU decisions and procedures based on? Who agrees on the law?
10. Name the first six countries of the EU:
11. How many countries make up the EU today?
12. The EU deals with trade and economy and what other important areas?
13. What has the European Union done for Europe in the last 50 years?

On a separate sheet of paper write a short essay comparing and contrasting the United State's political and economic system with the European Union. Compare their functions and purposes. How are they similar? How are they different? Give at least five similarities and five differences.

Teacher Handout 5

Current Event Assignment

Find an article about what is currently happening in the European Union. It should be from a major news magazine or newspaper. You must print a hard copy or cut one out from the magazine or newspaper. Write a summary of the article and a response answering the following questions: What is the author's purpose in writing the article? Do you agree with or disagree with the author's viewpoint (if it is stated) and why/why not? How does the article relate to you or to our nation? What is your general opinion on the subject? Turn in the article with your typed summary and response.